

DATE: March 3, 2022
TO: Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and Members of the Environment Committee
FROM: Sandy Fry, 74 Westland Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06107
Chair, Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board
SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Raised Bill No. 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails

This testimony is submitted in support of Raised Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails. I offer my testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Board of which I am Chair.

The Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board was created in 2009 under the Complete Streets Law (CGS Section 13b-13a). The Board's purpose is to examine the need for bicycle and pedestrian transportation, promote programs and facilities for bicycles and pedestrians, and advise appropriate agencies of the state on policies, programs and facilities for bicycles and pedestrians. It is with this purpose that we offer our testimony.

This important bill would increase the bond authorization for the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants program to \$6 million.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board has been encouraged by the progress made in Connecticut in the last several years in extending the state's network of greenways, bikeways and recreational trails. The state bonding provided for this purpose provides much needed funds for planning, design, and construction of such trails. The \$3 million that was made available last year, and the smaller amount in the previous year, however, came nowhere near to meeting the needs for trail development. In fact, the value of last year's applications was \$22 million, with \$7 million of these projects ranked very highly but unable to be funded. Increasing the annual bonding amount to \$6 million, and providing funding each year, will assist towns, trail organizations, and the state to make real progress with the trail system.

The increased funding will assist communities throughout the state: urban, suburban and rural. The grant program is well administered and is able to get funds out to the projects quickly and efficiently. Increasing the funding in 2022 to \$6 million will have immediate effects in improving Connecticut's recreational trail system.

Thank you for considering the input of the Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board on this bill.